

Message Text

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E.O. 11652 N/A
TAGS: CASC, PFOR, UR, US
SUBJECT: CONSULAR MEETING WITH AMERICAN PRISONERS

REF: MOSCOW 20102,

1. SUMMARY: CONSOFFS MET WITH AMERICAN PRISONERS BRAWER, BURN AND AMSTER AT 2 P.M. DEC 28. MFA REFUSED EMBASSY REQUEST TO PERMIT EMBASSY DOCTOR TO ATTEND MEETING. BRAWER AND BURN APPEAR TO BE IN GOOD HEALTH, ALTHOUGH BOTH HAVE A VARIETY OF COMPLAINTS ABOUT THEIR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL CONDITION AND ABOUT THEIR TREATMENT BY SOVIET AUTHORITIES. AMSTER'S PHYSICAL AND MENTAL CONDITION HAS MARKEDLY DETERIORATED SINCE LAST MEETING. HE IS NOW IN AS BAD SHAPE AS WE HAVE SEEN HIM, INCLUDING DURING PERIOD OF WITHDRAWAL FROM NARCOTICS. END SUMMARY.

CONSOFFS MET WITH AMERICAN PRISONERS BRAWER, BURN AND AMSTER FOR MORE THAN TWO HOURS AFTERNOON OF DECEMBER 28. THIS MEETING WAS CONDUCTED WITH ALL THREE PRISONERS PRESENT A SAME TIME ALTHOUGH CONSOFFS LATER MET SEPARATELY WITH AMSTER AT HIS REQUEST. TWO MVD OFFICERS AND ONE TRANSLATOR WERE PRESENT THROUGHOUT MEETING. BRAWER TENDED TO DOMINATE CONVERSATION DURING INITIAL PART OF MEETING ALTHOUGH CONSOFFS WERE ABLE TO DRAW OUT BURN AND AMSTER TO SOME EXTENT.

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3. HEALTH OF PRISONERS. BRAWER BEGAN CONVERSATION WITH SERIES OF COMPLAINTS ABOUT HIS TREATMENT IN CAMP AND PHYSICAL CONDITION. HE STATED THAT HE HAD BEEN IN HOSPITAL FOR A MONTH BECAUSE OF HIS STOMACH AND HAD LOST 58 POUNDS. (COMMENT: CONSOFFS IMPRESSION WAS THAT HE HAS INDEED LOST SOME WEIGHT SINCE INITAL IMPRISON-

MENT--PERHAPS 15-20 POUNDS OVERALL. HOWEVER, HE LOOKS HEALTHY, PHYSICALLY FIT AND SLIGHTLY STOCKY.) BURN HAS ALSO BEEN TREATED FOR STOMACH AILMENTS. BOTH MEN HAVE BEEN PROMISED SPECIAL DIETS BEGINNING JANUARY 1.

4. AMSTER WAS RECENTLY IN HOSPITAL FOR CHECKUP AS A RESULT OF HAVING PASSED OUT TWICE. HE SAYS THAT HIS NERVOUS CONDITION CAUSED HIM TO BLACK OUT AND THAT THE CAMP "FEL'DSHER" SAID THAT HE WAS HAVING A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN. HE CLAIMS THAT HE CANNOT SLEEP DESPITE HAVING TAKEN STRONG MEDICATION TO HELP HIM SLEEP. DURING INDIVIDUAL MEETING WITH CONSOFFS, AMSTER MADE APPEAL TO BE PLACED IN HOSPITAL OR CAMP DISPENSARY BECAUSE OF HIS PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL CONDITION. HE SAYS THAT HE UNDERSTANDS NOW WHAT PRISONERS ARE UP AGAINST BECAUSE OF FACT THAT CRIME THEY ARE IMPRISONED FOR INVOLVES NARCOTICS. HE SAID THAT HE WAS CONSIDERING SUICIDE, THAT HE DID NOT HAVE COURAGE NOW TO FIND EASY SOLUTION BUT THOUGH HE WOULD SOON. HE SAID HE SPENDS A LOT OF WAKING HOURS DREAMING AS A FORM OF ESCAPE AND THAT HIS PROBLEMS ARE NOW BEING NOTICED BY FELLOW CAMP INMATES, WHICH MAKES THE SITUATION MORE DIFFICULT. OTHER PRISONERS CALL HIM "FRANKENSTEIN."

5. TREATMENT IN CAMP. ALL THREE CONTINUE TO COMPLAIN ABOUT CAMP FOOD. BRAWER CLAIMED BREAD IS BAKED WITH MATCHSTICKS, CIGARETTES AND SAWDUST, IN ADDITION OF MORE USUAL INGREDIENTS. AT HIS REQUEST, AMSTER PRODUCED SMALL PIECE OF WOOD ALLEGEDLY FROM A LOAF OF PRISON BREAD FROM SHIRT POCKET. BREAD IS NEVERTHELESS EDIBLE, UNLIKE KASHA. THEY RECEIVE LITTLE IF ANY MEAT AND ONE 15 GRAM PORTION OF FISH EVERY OTHER DAY.

6. BRAWER CLAIMS THAT SAFETY CANNOT BE GUARANTEED FOR AMERICANS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WITHIN THE PRISON CAMP. HE SAYS THAT HE IS FORCED TO DENOUNCE THE UNITED STATES, THAT HE IS TIRED OF IT AND PLANS TO FIGHT BACK WHEN HE RETURNS TO CAMP. AT LATER MEETING WITH CONSOFFS, AMSTER DISSOCIATED HIMSELF WITH THIS AND MANY OTHER PORTIONS OF STORY BRAWER PRESENTED. WITH REGARD TO RELATIONS TO OTHER PRISONERS, AMSTER STATED THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO ANIMOSITY TOWARD AMERICANS WHEN THEY FIRST ARRIVED AT CAMP. ANIMOSITY DOES EXIST NOW BECAUSE BRAWER'S BEHAVIOR HAS ALIENATED OTHER PRISONERS AS WELL AS CAMP ADMINISTRATION. BRAWER HAS COME CLOSE TO BEING IN FIGHTS NUMEROUS TIMES. HE CONTINUALLY TALKS TO OTHER PRISONERS ABOUT HIS HIGH CONNECTIONS IN US, ABOUT GRAIN US SENDS TO SOVIET UNION AND HOW BRAWER WILL HAVE SHIPMENTS STOPPED. AMSTER SAID THERE WAS NO ABUSE FROM CAMP ADMINISTRATION.

7. ALL THREE PRISONERS HAVE BEEN TRANSFERRED TO NEW JOBS, AT THEIR OWN REQUEST. BRAWER SAID THAT HE HAD REFUSED TO EAT AS A PROTEST TO WORKING IN THE FACTORY AND WAS TRANSFERRED TO WORKING OUTSIDE, CHOPPING FIREWOOD. HE SHOWED CONSOFFS COPY OF HIS

WRPQ TEN PROFHES T, WHICH REFERRED TO LACK OF VENTILATION, LACK OF SECURITY AND DIFFICULTY OF MEETING WORK QUOTAS. BURNS IS NOW WORKING ON A LATHE MAKING SMALL WOODEN CHESS PIECES. AMSTER WAS TRANSFERRED TO WORKING ON A SEWING MACHINE.

8. PRISONERS STATED THEY HAD NOT RECEIVED ANY MAIL AND EXPRESSED DOUBT THEIR LETTERS OUT WERE BEING FORWARDED. BRAWER SAYS HE HAS SENT NINE LETTERS TO HIS WIFE SINCE ARRIVAL AT CAMP. THEY COMPLAINED ABOUT THE HARDSHIPS OF THE JOURNEY FROM CAPE TO MOSOW. THEY LEFT CAMP MORNING OF DECEMBER 24, SPENT SEVERAL DAYS IN WHAT THEY DESCRIBED AS A 5 FT BY 6 FT ISOLATION ROOM WHICH WAS TOO SMALL FOR THEM TO STAND UP IN, CAME TO MOSCOW BY TRAIN IN WHAT THEY DESCRIBED AS A CAGE AND ARRIVED THE MORNING OF 28TH THEY STATED THAT THEY HAVE BEEN ISSUED WARM CLOTHING BY PRISON AUTHORITIES BUT WHEN THEY MAKE TRIPS TO MOSCOW, THEY ARE REQUIRED TO CHANGE INTO THEIR CIVILIAN CLOTHES WHICH ARE NOT NEARLY AS WELL SUITED TO RUSSIAN WINTERS.

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9. BURN AND BRAWER BOTH STATE THEY ARE UNABLE TO USE THE CAMP STORE BECAUSE THEY HAVE RECEIVED NO MONEY. THEY STATE THEY HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO MEET CAMP-ESTABLISHED WORK QUOTAS AND THEREFORE DO NOT RECEIVE FUNDS FOR PURCHASES AT CAMP STORE. BURN CLAIMS TO HAVE THREE RUBLES LAST MONTH BUT THAT ALL OF IT WAS DEDUCTED TO PAY FOR FOOD AND CLOTHES. ALL THREE HAVE TRADED CIGARETTES WHICH THEY WERE GIVEN BY CONSOFFS AT LAST MEETING FOR FOOD. MVD OFFICIAL PRESENT AT MEETING CHALLENGED BRAWER AND BURN ASSERTION THAT THEY HAD NOT RECEIVED ANY CREDIT TO BE SPENT AT CAMP STORE. AFTER ELICITING FROM THEM STATEMENT OF ITEMS AVAILABLE AT STORE, HE STATED THAT ACCORDING TO REGULATIONS EACH PRISONER IS GUARANTEED A MINIMUM OF 3 RUBLES PER MONTH TO BE SPENT AT CAMP STORE. BRAWER AND BURN SAID THEY HAD NOT RECEIVED ANY CREDIT TO USE AT STORE SINCE THEY ARRIVED AT CAMP. GUARD AGREED TO CHECK INTO MATTER. AMSTER LATER TOLD CONSOFFS THAT ALL THREE PRISONERS DO RECEIVE SIX RUBLES PER MONTH TO USE IN CAMP STORE. PART OF THE MONEY COMES FROM EARNINGS FOR WORK PERFORMED AT CAMP. THERE ARE DEDUCTIONS FROM THIS FOR ITEMS SUCH AS FOOD AND CLOTHING. FUNDS THEY HAVE HAD TRANSFERRED FROM LEFORTEVA PRISON ARE USED TO MAKE UP THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHAT THEY EARN AND THE SIX RUBLES THEY ARE PERMITTED TO SPEND AT THE STORE. AS AN EXAMPLE OF STORE PRICES, AMSTER SAID THAT LOAVES OF WHITE BREAD COST 25 KOPECKS.

10. APPEALS. BRAWER ASKED ABOUT APPEAL BY EMBASSY. CONSOFFS TOLD HIM THAT HIS WIFE HAD SUBMITTED APPEALS ON HIS BEHALF TO PODGORNYY, BREZHNEV AND DOBRYNIN AND ALSO THAT SHE HAD WRITTEN TO SENATOR CANNON BUT ADDED THAT THERE WOULD BE NO APPEAL ON BEHALF OF PRISONERS BY U.S. GOVERNMENT AT THIS TIME. BRAWER RESPONDED "WE'RE FINISHED THEN. THAT'S IT." ALL THREE REQUESTED

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IN STRONGEST TERMS THAT THEIR FAMILIES MAKE SPEEDY APPEALS FOR THEIR RELEASE. BRAWER PROVIDED LONG LIST OF PERSONS THAT HE WOULD LIKE HIS WIFE AND OTHER RELATIVES TO CONTACT, WITH REQUEST THAT THEY USE THEIR INFLUENCE WITH STATE DEPARTMENT, OTHER AGENCIES OF U.S. GOVERNMENT AND SOVIET GOVERNMENT TO PROMOTE APPEAL. NAMES GIVEN TO BE CONTACTED BY WIFE WERE: BEVERLY LECHWORTH, IDOL RACHID, DAN FLOOD, CONGRESSMEN HELSTOSKI AND RODINO, HAND GREENS-PUN OF LAS VEGAS SUN, SANTINI AND LAXALT (NO FIRST NAMES GIVE). WANTS WIFE TO GIVE THEM FOLLOING MESSAGE: "BRAWER'S PUNISHMENT HAS BEEN SO SEVERE THAT HE HAS PAID SUFFICIENTLY FOR HIS CRIME. PLEASE HELP HIM COME HOME." BRAWER ALSO REQUESTED CONSOFFS TO ARRANGE MEETING FOR HIM WITH KGB. WHEN TOLD THIS WOULD NOT BE DONE BY USG OFFICIALS, HE SAID HE WOULD ARRANGE IT HIMSELF.

11. CAMP. PRISONERS PROVIDED SOME ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON CAMP ITSELF. SIZE OF CAMP ENCLOSURE IS 500FT BY 1300 FT. LOG CABIN NO. 10 IN WHICH AMERICANS LIVE IS ABOUT 14 FT BY 30 FT AND HOUSES 34 PEOPLE. PRISONERS ARE PERMITTED WEEKLY BATH WHICH CONSISTS OF PAIL OF WATER THEY ARE PEMITTED TO THROW OVER THEIR HEADS. FACTORY IN WHICH ALL THREE ORIGINALLY WORKED IS LOCATED IN SEPARATE COMPOUND BESIDE CAMP.

12. RELATIONS BETWEEN THREE PRISONERS. IN SEPARATE MEETING WITH CONSOFFS, AMSTER PICTURED BRAWER AS DOMINANT MEMBER OF GROUP,
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VIOLENT AND QUOTE WILD UNQUOTE. HE COERCES BURN AND AMSTER INTO SUPPORTING HIM WITH IMPLICIT AND SOMETIMES EXPLICIT THREATS OF VIOLENCE. AMSTER SAID THAT WHILE MUCH OF WHAT HAD BEEN SAID BY BURN AND BRAWER WAS TRUE, A LOT WAS EITHER NOT TRUE OR EXAGGERATED. HE CONTENTED THAT BOTH HE AND BURN FEAR BRAWER AND BECAUSE OF THIS SOMETIMES SUPPORT HIS LIES. BRAWER MAKES PROTESTS WHERE NONE ARE NEEDED AND "MARCHES" BURN AND AMSTER IN TO SUPPORT HIS PROTESTS. HE CLAIMS THERE IS NO PROTECTION IN CAMP AND THAT BRAWER HAS TWICE COME CLOSE TO BEING VIOLENT WITH BURN PREVVIOUS NIGHT. AMSTER

STATED THAT IF HIS ONLY ALTERNATIVE WAS TO TRAVEL ON TRAIN TO MEETING WITH CONSOFFS WITH BRAWER, HE WOULD RATHER STAY AT CAMP. HE DESCRIBED BRAWER AS HARDER TO TAKE THEN REST OF MEMBERS OF CAMP.

13. INTERROGATION OF PRISONERS. ALL THREE PRISONERS WERE VISITED BY ENGLISH SPEAKING SOVIET WHO TOLD THEM HE WAS FROM MVD IN MOSCOW. THIS OFFICIAL QUESTIONED THEM ABOUT HOW THEY WERE AND ALSO ABOUT THEIR ACQUAINTANCES WITHIN CAMP. AMSTER WAS IN ADDITION INTERVIEWED BY THREE SOVIETS WHO SAID THEY WERE FROM KBG. THEY ASKED HIM WHAT HE WOULD SMUGGLE INTO THE SOVIET UNION IF HE EVER RETURNED. WHEN HE SAID THAT HE WOULD NOT SMUGGLE AGAIN, THEY PRESSED HIM FOR A HYPOTHEHETICAL ANSWER. UNDER PRESSURE, HE TOLD THEM THAT IF HE WERE TO SMUGGLE AGAIN, HE WOULD SMUGGLE FOOD, CLOTHES, CIGARETTES AND WHISKEY. HE SAID THAT HE MADE THIS RESPONSE BECAUSE HE LEARNED IN CAMP THAT THESE WERE MORE OR LESS ACCEPTABLE ITEMS TO SMUGGLE. KGB OFFICIALS ALSO QUERIED HIM ABOUT MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY AND WHAT KIND OF WORK THEY DID. THEY INTENDED TO SEE BURN AND BRAWER BUT ACCORDING TO AMSTER, DID NOT HAVE TIME.

14. MESSAGES FROM PRISONERS. IN ADDITION TO REQUESTS FOR APPEALS, BURN ASKED THAT MESSAGE BE PASSED TO HIS SISTER TO SUSAN SUGAR AND AKS HER TO SEND SKI CLOTHES, SOCKS AND GLOVES. AMSTER ASKED THAT MESSAGE BE PASSED TO HIS AUNT TELLING HER THAT AMSTER LOVES HER AND THANKS HER FOR HER HELP. HE ASKS HER TO BE TOLD TRUTH ABOUT HIS CONDITION AND ASKS THAT SHE SEND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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APPEAL ON HIS BEHALF AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

15. COMMENT: CONSOFFS CREDIT AMSTER'S STORY OF TREATMENT AT CAMP MORE THAN THEY CREDIT BRAWER'S DESPITE FACT THAT AMSTER MAY BE SEEKING INGRATIATE HIMSELF WITH SOVIET AUTHORITES. BRAWER AND BURN APPEAR TO BE IN GOOD HEALTH, ALERT AND ACTIVE. OBVIOUSLY THEY DO NOT LIKE PRISON CAMP BUT WE SEE NO EVIDENCE FROM THEIR PHYSICAL OR MENTAL APPEARANCE THAT THEY ARE BEING MISTREATED OR ARE IN ANY SERIOUS DANGER, UNLESS SITUATION INVOLVING OTHER PRISONERS CONTINUES TO DETERIORATE. IT MUST BE REMEMBERED THAT THEY ARE IMPRISONED WITH INDIVIDUALS CONVICTED OF MURDER AND POSSIBILITY OF VIOLENCE CANNOT BE RULED OUT.

16. AMSTER'S PHYSICAL AND MENTAL CONDITION ON THE OTHER HAND HAS DETERIORATED SUBSTANTIALLY SINCE LAST SEEN BY CONSOFFS A MONTH AGO. HE IS APPARENTLY SUBJECT TO BLACKOUTS, TREMBLES, WEEPS, AND WITHDRAWS INTO INNER THOUGHTS FREQUENTLY. CONSOFFS DISCUSSED HIS CONDITION WITH MVD OFFICIALS PRESENT AT MEETING AND REQUESTED THAT HE BE PLACED IN HOSPITAL, PREFERABLY IN MOSCOW. MVD OFFICIAL REPLIED THAT HE WOULD BE RETURNED TO HOSPITAL NEAR CAMP AND IF HE COULD NOT BE TREATED THERE, WOULD BE SENT TO HOSPITAL IN LENINGRAD. WE DO NOT THINK THERE IS MUCH PROSPECT THAT HE WILL

BE SENT TO HOSPITAL IN LENINGRAD BUT THINK THERE IS REASONABLE CHANCE HE WILL BE RETURNED TO HOSPITAL NEAR CAMP WHERE HE WAS TREATED FOR A WEEK PRECENTLY. WE INTEND TO SEND NOTE TO MFA REFERRING TO OUR PRIOR NOTE (NO. 1651), WHICH DESCRIBED AMSTER'S EARLIER MENTAL PROBLEMS, STATING OUR CONCERN ABOUT HIS PRESENT CONDITION AND REQUESTING THAT THE BE PLACED IN HOSPITAL IN WHICH HE CAN RECEIVE TREATMENT SUITED TO HIS PROBLEMS.

17. IN RESPONSE TO EMBASSY NOTE NO . 1651 ON AMSTER'S MEDICAL PROBLEMS, MFA USA DIVISION COUNSLEOR TRIFONOV TOLD ACTING POLITICAL COUNSELOR ON DECEMBER 29 THAT AMSTER WAS EXAMINED ON DECEMBER 8 BY SOVIET MEDICAL TEAM WHICH INCLUDED NEUROPATHOLOGIST, PSYCHIATRISTS, SURGEON AND THERAPY SPECIALIST. THEY FOUND THAT HE SUFFERS FROM AN EXPRESS INCLINATIN TO USE OF NARCOTICS AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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ASTHENIA OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM. HE IS THEREFORE HOSPITALIZED AT PLACE OF HIS INCARCERATION FOR TREATMENT TO STRENGTHEN HIS PHYSICAL AND NERVOUS SYSTEMS. HE NEEDS CONTINUING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE.

18. SOVIET AUTHORITIES THUS SEEM FULLY AWARE OF AMSTER'S PROBLEMS. WE BELIEVE EMBASSY NOTE WILL HELP ENSURE THAT HIS CONDITION CONTINUE TO RECEIVE ATTENTION.

19. WE ARE INCLINED TO VIEW MVD AND KGB VISITS WITH PRISONERS, IF THAT IS IN FACT WHAT THEY WERE, TO SOVIET POLITICAL SENSITIVITY ABOUT HOLDING AMERICAN PRISONERS RATHER THAN TO MORE SINISTER MOTIVES. QUESTIONS POSED TO AMSTER COULD ALSO BE INTERPRETED AS PREPARING GROUNDS FOR RELEASE.

20. CONSOFFS WERE ABLE WITH SOME DIFFICULTY TO PERSUADE MVD TO PERMIT PRISONERS TO RECEIVE FOOD AND CIGARETTES, WHICH WERE TURNED OVER TO THEM IN PRESENCE OF CONSOFFS.

21. EMBASSY REQUESTS DEPT PASS TO PRISONERS' FAMILIES MESSAGES PARAS 10 AND 14, PARTICULARLY REITERATING PRISONERS REQUESTS FOR SPEEDY PRIVATE APPEALS WHICH EMBASSY BELIVES WILL MEAN EARLIER RELEASE THAN WOULD OTHERWISE OCCUR.
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